

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHFR #2359/01 1560955
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
O 050955Z JUN 07
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 7903
INFO RUEHXP/ALL NATO POST COLLECTIVE IMMEDIATE
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL IMMEDIATE 0500
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHINGTON DC IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARIS 002359

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/04/2017
TAGS: [PREL](#) [NATO](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IR](#) [FR](#)
SUBJECT: FRENCH WILL NOT LEAVE AFGHANISTAN; LESS PRESSURE
ON IRAQ; EU IS THE PRIORITY

REF: PARIS 2208

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CRAIG R. STAPLETON FOR REASONS 1.4 (b) and (d)
)

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: MFA Political Director Gerard Araud told the Ambassador on June 4 that President Sarkozy had made a decision the previous day that France would not leave Afghanistan, but did want to begin discussing an exit strategy in a restricted format (Germany, the UK, the U.S., and France). Araud said that Sarkozy intended to increase military training assistance by augmenting the number of embedded teams from one to 14 (we presume he was referring to NATO's Operational Mentoring and Liaison Teams, or OMLTs). On Iraq, Araud reiterated (ref) that the GOF would be backing off from statements by the previous administration suggesting the U.S. should have a time horizon for withdrawal. Araud said Sarkozy was also heavily involved in working to obtain support for an EU simplified treaty, if only to shift blame for any future impasse to another country. Araud said that Pierre Vimont remained the top candidate to become Ambassador to the U.S., but that it was not yet a done deal. END SUMMARY

AFGHANISTAN

¶2. (C) President Sarkozy decided during a restricted cabinet meeting on June 3 that France would stay in Afghanistan and augment military training assistance, Araud said. Araud focused on Sarkozy's decision to increase military training assistance (again we assume he was referring to the OMLTs) and downplayed the request to discuss an exit strategy in a restricted format by noting that the discussions did not necessarily need to come to any conclusions for the time being. He added that we should begin to prepare for the unavoidable -- that some European governments would bow to their public opinion and withdraw before the U.S. and NATO were necessarily prepared to call the mission complete. Reiterating his earlier comment (reftel), Araud laid out his Qasoning very simply, saying, "the Taliban can't win, NATO can't win, and we have years and years of fighting ahead of us, while European public opinion is tiring quickly... the only outcome is Afghanization... we need to begin discussing at what point we will be ready to turn the responsibility over to the Afghans." Araud insisted that the talks would be aimed at discussing what the "end-game" should look like, but would not be a premise for France's withdrawal. He did not offer specific requests on format or timing, except to say, "soon."

IRAQ

¶3. (C) Araud noted that the GOF would be backing off from statements about Iraq and calls on the U.S. to provide a horizon for an eventual withdrawal. The new administration, he said, saw no utility in such rhetoric.

EU TREATY

¶4. (C) Araud expressed some optimism that Sarkozy was making headway with other EU member states on his call for a "simplified" treaty. Even if France did not succeed, at a minimum its current activism would shift responsibility for any potential impasse from France to another country. Araud praised Presidential Diplomatic Advisor Jean-David Levitte for the strategy, which he likened to a French children's game similar to "Old Maid." For the moment, he said, it appeared that either the British or the Polish would become the key obstacle. While PM Tony Blair might agree to the simplified treaty, signals from Gordon Brown were not particularly positive though he remained somewhat of an unknown quantity. Araud argued that the Poles were the wild card because of their unpredictability. As it stood, the current signals from Warsaw were rather negative. Sarkozy remained engaged, he said, and the EU and domestic issues would likely be taking up most of his summer straight through the UNGA in September.

FRENCH AMBASSADOR TO THE U.S.

¶5. (C) Araud said that Pierre Vimont was still the top choice to be Ambassador to the U.S., but noted that the lack of an active Mrs. Vimont was working against him. Because the social duties of an Ambassador to the U.S. were rather demanding, this was actually a fairly serious issue, he added. Despite all that, Araud said he felt fairly comfortable with whatever the final decision would be since it now appeared that Sarkozy would choose someone from inside the foreign affairs establishment.

Please visit Paris' Classified Website at:
<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/paris/index.cfm>

STAPLETON